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REVISED SOVIET TACTICS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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Indications of a Change in Soviet Tactics

1. The USSR has apparently decided that for the time being more subtle tactics should be employed in implementing its basic foreign and military policy (see ORE 1, dated 23 July 1946). Recent developments indicating this decision include:

a. Soviet concessions on the Trieste issue.

b. Soviet acceptance of the principle of free navigation on the Danube.

c. Soviet agreement in principle to international inspection of armaments and to eliminate the veto in the work of the contemplated atomic and disarmament commissions.

d. Indications of substantial reductions in Soviet occupation forces.

e. Failure of the USSR to render effective support to Azerbaijan.

f. Agreement of the Security Council to investigate responsibility for disorders on the Greek frontier.

g. Relaxation from former extreme position of interpreting abstention as a veto to meaning not an expression of a veto.

h. Agreement to have Foreign Ministers' Deputies meet in London before the forthcoming Moscow Conference to draw up draft treaty for Austria and Germany.

Considerations Conducive Toward a Change in Tactics

2. There are a number of considerations, both international and domestic, which appear to have convinced the Kremlin of the desirability of a temporary change of course:

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3. International considerations in estimated order of importance include:

a. The firm policy of the Western Powers, especially the US; the realization that a further expansion of Soviet control in Europe cannot be accomplished by force without risk of war; and the desire to placate the US and the UK in order to encourage a relaxation of Western vigilance, to strengthen the hand of Western advocates of a conciliatory policy toward the USSR, and to obtain economic aid from the West for sorely needed rehabilitation.

b. The benefits to the USSR from a reduction in its occupation forces. With effective control over Soviet-dominated areas in Europe established to the maximum extent possible at present, the USSR can afford to reduce its present excessive occupation forces, especially in view of the increased mechanization of the remaining troops. A reduction in occupation forces would have the following benefits:

(1) Release of additional manpower sorely needed for the Soviet internal economy.

(2) Reduction of antagonism throughout the world.

(3) Alleviation of a major cause of popular hostility toward the Communist Parties in occupied areas where local elements have been disillusioned and alienated by ruthless Soviet reparations policies, the conduct of Soviet troops and the burden of subsisting these troops.

(4) A basis for attempting to induce further reductions of occupation forces by the Western Powers. The USSR will undoubtedly use any drastic reduction in its occupation forces to support a campaign of diplomacy and propaganda to secure further reductions in the occupation forces of the Western Powers. Proportionate reductions by all of the Allied Powers would have the net effect of strengthening the Soviet Union's relative position on the Continent. Once the occupation forces of the US and the UK have been reduced, there is small chance that they could be readily increased again. The USSR, on the other hand, is in a position to move troops into and out of the areas under its control with relative ease and secrecy. It is likewise in a position to conceal the presence of its troops abroad by infiltrating them into satellite armies and police forces, and by settling them as "civilians" in occupied areas, ready for mobilization on short notice.

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c. The USSR's need of support at international gatherings from the smaller nations outside the Soviet bloc which have recently been aligning themselves with Anglo-American positions in opposition to arbitrary Soviet tactics.

d. Net advantages to the USSR of general disarmament among the major powers. The realization of a general disarmament program would result in a decided relative advantage to the Soviet Union. Whereas the Western Powers derive their military strength from extensive navies, strategic air forces and intricate modern weapons, that of the USSR is still essentially based on mass land armies. Once reduced, therefore, the war potential of the West would require years to restore, while that of the USSR would be substantially restored merely by the re-mobilizing of manpower.

4. Domestic factors which would have equal weight in producing a temporary change in Soviet tactics are:

a. Internal economic conditions. The condition of Soviet agriculture is undoubtedly serious, with critical shortages in some vital foods, while certain basic industries are failing to meet the quotas prescribed by the Fourth Five-Year Plan. As a result, the Kremlin may have been forced to revise its estimate of the proportions of the national economy which could be diverted to military purposes, because the immediate needs of the USSR, particularly the devastated areas, have exceeded what it was reasonable to plan for industry to produce.

b. Civilian morale. There are increasing signs of apathy, and even unrest, among the Soviet populace. Shortages in food, housing, and consumer goods have created widespread dissatisfaction. The vigorous campaign of "ideological cleansing" indicates the concern with which the Kremlin views the situation.

c. Morale among former occupation troops. The occupation has furnished a large number of Soviet citizens with their first opportunity to view the outside world. The "bourgeois fleshpots" of Germany, Austria, and the Balkans have produced disillusionment, a reluctance to return to the USSR, and a substantial number of desertions.* Demobilized occupation troops are spreading the infection throughout the USSR, which is probably an important element in current domestic dissatisfaction. The large-scale

* The Department of State considers this sentence too strong because it implies that these conditions are rather prevalent. C.I.G. and the War and Navy Departments, however, consider that these conditions are indeed prevalent.

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occupation has thus constituted a breach in the barriers which guard the Soviet people from foreign ideology and information, and which are so essential to the maintenance of the Kremlin's control.

Probable Future Tactics

5. In view of the foregoing considerations, Soviet leaders must have decided upon a temporary breathing space for the purpose of economic and ideological rehabilitation at home and the consolidation of positions abroad. We believe, however, that the Kremlin has not abandoned any of its long-range objectives described in ORE 1, but that these objectives will now be pursued where expedient by methods more subtle than those of recent months. Such methods will include:

a. Continued efforts to gain political and economic control of Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Korea, by certain characteristically Soviet techniques, which would not necessitate the presence of large Soviet military forces. Such techniques consist of the "popular front", or coalition, political strategy, under which relatively weak Communist parties merge with and gain control of leftist and liberal organizations; infiltration, by Moscow agents or local Communists, into key government positions, especially police, judicial, military, propaganda, and educational agencies; the "liquidation" by local Communist parties of all native elements which might be expected to oppose the Soviet program; and the stripping or expropriation of key industrial plants and the establishment of elaborate cartel systems, giving the USSR control of vital industry.

b. Intensification of militant Communist activity in European areas outside of the present Soviet sphere, aimed at producing Communist or Communist-controlled governments by legal or revolutionary means in such countries as France, Italy, Spain, and Greece.

c. Political and economic penetration in the Middle East, Far East, and Latin America.

d. Elaborate campaigns of propaganda and diplomacy designed to convince the world of the USSR's peaceful intentions, and to promote disarmament and pacifism abroad.

e. An intensive long-range program to develop the war potential of the USSR, concentrating especially on the expansion of basic industries, on the secret development of new weapons, on the acquisition of information on secret military developments in other countries, and on reducing the vulnerability of Soviet industry to attack by atom bombs, rockets, etc.

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f. Promotion of discord and unrest in the capitalist countries, especially by seizing any opportunities offered by periodic economic crises and unemployment, which the Soviets confidently predict for the near future.

Conclusions

6. Recent developments have confirmed previous estimates that the USSR did not intend and was not in a position to engage in immediate military conquests. Its ultimate action will depend upon future developments in the Soviet Union and in the outside world. Meanwhile, the USSR is seeking to consolidate its positions abroad and to improve its economic and psychological position at home, while encouraging disarmament and pacifism in the rest of the world.

7. Soviet tactics, however, will remain flexible and opportunistic. The Kremlin has never relied exclusively on any single line of action. Rather, its tactics are based on the inter-play of two apparently conflicting courses, international collaboration and unilateral aggression, and on its ability suddenly to shift from one to the other. This technique seeks to achieve maximum surprise for each new move, and to promote such confusion and uncertainty among the opposition as to prevent the development of any long-range counter-strategy. Thus, in view of the considerations described in the preceding pages, new tactics of compromise and conciliation have been adopted merely as a matter of expediency. They will be employed only in those situations where they are deemed to further Soviet foreign and military policy as described in ORE 1.

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